

DIS-CONNECT...

Reflecting on information control



Gunther stared intently at the center of the table, his voice dropping to a low, ominous rumble. "Woe to those who ask too much."

"Yeah," Liao chimed hesitantly, tapping a restless rhythm with his knuckles on the wood. "Questioning is usually tolerated only within strict limits."

Nadya swirled the liquid in her coffee cup, her eyes reflecting the dim overhead light. "Mmm... we're trained to be obedient from the cradle," she murmured, looking up to challenge the group. "Yet blind obedience is ultimately stupid. Isn't it good to question why many phenomena exist?"

Bill ran his hand through his hair, offering a slow, weary shake of his head. "Questioning is okay, Nadya, but we can understand only a small fraction of the answers. The world is simply too complex and our lifespans are too brief." He leaned back, gesturing broadly with his hands. "For that reason, most of our 'answers' are essentially expedients. They are mere simplifications of things that are inherently complex."

"People who question a lot might be annoying, but they are essential," Liao countered, leaning forward to regain the floor, his tone sharp with conviction. "Indeed, it's through questioning that new discoveries and innovations arise."

Lost in thought, Gunther gesticulated while muttering, "Every system has its thresholds. When societies are robust and healthy, lots of criticism and questioning is tolerated. However, under stress, conformity is often demanded." He paused, adjusting his glasses with an academic air. "As Quetelet notes, there's a mathematics to all social processes."

Bill caught the thread, a cynical smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "So did Harry Seldon, but that is fiction. However, I find it fascinating how some dictators almost welcome stress. It gives them a chance to consolidate power, at least for the short term." Bill leaned back in his chair again, crossing his arms. "Few dictators are far-sighted enough to realize power requires a broad base to be sustainable."

A heavy silence fell over the table, broken suddenly by a long, dramatic sigh from the end of the booth. Gus slumped lower into his seat, throwing his hands up in mock defeat. "You guys are over my head," he grumbled, shaking his head. "I feel completely disconnected from this pseudo-conversation."

- T NEWFIELDS

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NOTE: This piece was partially generated with AI tools for styling and ideation; human editing was then applied.